

"Yes; he saw me. What news, Christopher?" said Dorothy, turning to the bailiff, who fortunately entered at this moment.

'Tis moonlight, madam, and old Shipley will not be back till to-morrow. If it would please you to walk a little way through the park, and look at the house, we could do it very safely."

"I will come, most gladly," said Dorothy, and she rose to wrap herself in her cloak, thankful to escape from Bridget's recollections.

Out under the trees, the well-known trees which Marnaduke used to climb, and pursuing the path through light and shadow down which they had so often hurried together, he to consult Christopher about some of his many plans, and she to sit awhile with Dame Wake, hear of her aches and pains, and take a lesson in knitting;—here, in her own park, Dorothy's heart was too full of old memories: she could not talk, but leant silently on her cousin's arm, as they followed Christopher through the brown and frosty grass. At last they paused between two great leafless chestnut trees, where they had a view of the whole south front of the house, with its many closed windows, and the old terrace where she used to feed her pigeons, and the stone steps that led into the garden below, with its winding walks among the trees. Frank Audley was scarcely less moved than his cousin by the sight of the house, where all the happiest days of his life had been spent; the sorrowful contrast of past and present brought tears to his eyes. As they stood gazing, there was a sudden rustle in the fern. Christopher sprang forward, and Frank drew Dorothy back into the shadow: but it was a girl's figure that appeared, climbing hastily up the little slope.

"Is she here? Oh, let me pass! I must speak to her," and Adah Shipley, passing Christopher, came towards Dorothy, who instantly opened her arms, and received her with a warm embrace.

"Who told you I was here, Adah?" she said.

"Dear lady, it was Christopher. He knew you would trust me."

"I should have told Mistress Dorothy the whole truth," said the bailiff, coming a few steps nearer. "This maiden is to be my wife one day, madam: we have so settled it between ourselves."

"Do not trouble Mistress Dorothy with our matters, at such a time as this," said Adah, while Dorothy paused in astonishment.

"Dear Adah, can it be? I am happy to hear such news. But your father and mother,—have they nothing to say?"

"Mistress Shipley is my very good friend," said Christopher. "I have known her since I was a child, and she is willing to give me her daughter. We have not yet asked her husband's consent. He has too much public business to think of such things. And we know that we must wait, these be no days for marrying."

"All will yet be well," said Dorothy, and she pressed Adah's hand with an affection which brought tears to the little Puritan's eyes.

"My father is away to-night," she said. "Christopher knows that; but I came out to tell you that Simon is gone to Wylbourn. He will scarce be back before midnight, and if you care to come into the house, it is all safe, and my mother will be rejoiced."

Frank listened in some surprise to this proposal. He did not know Adah, and wondered that Dorothy should be on such friendly terms with the usurpers of her house. But she turned to him, and put her hand into his arm, saying; "Shall we go, Frank? You will be glad to see it again."

"As you will," said Captain Audley. "Nothing can happen, I suppose? In any case, I am here to guard you."

"Nothing will happen," said Adah, confidently, and she hurried on with Christopher towards the house, while Frank and Dorothy followed them. He felt that it was an adventure of which evil might possibly come, but with Christopher and himself at her side, he thought no harm could reach Dorothy.

They crossed the garden, with its thousand memories, passed up the very path where the primroses grew, and paused a moment on the terrace. The old place